



Societal Shallowness Compelling Manohar Mouli Biswas to Delineate his own world of Suffering in Surviving in my World: Growing up Dalit in Bengal

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Abstract— *The paper aims to analyse Surviving in My World: Growing Up Dalit in Bengal by Manohar Mouli Biswas as a Dalit autobiography and how it depicts the writer's life in a contentious community where he has been prone to inhumane suffering and intimidation imposed by the upper castes only for appearing from a Dalit background. Biswas's autobiographical novel lends readers a vent into the inhumane nature of suffering, both corporal and societal, inflicted upon the Dalits in Bengal. It is largely claimed by Dalit writers that non-Dalit writers can never communicate the suffering experienced by the Dalits through their writings as their writings come from a certain sense of sympathy but Dalit writers largely empathize with their experienced pain and can delineate it through their writings quite distinctly. This disparity formulates a huge rift between the perceptions of the Dalit writers and that of the non-Dalit writers. This is perhaps why the Dalit writers prefer to communicate their arguments through their autobiographies without any influence of any writer outside the Dalit community. My paper will thus serve as a mirror within our society where caste plays a pivotal evil role, creating a rift. His experiences not only make us think about hardships but also make us amazed at our society where people are treated as animals even though they are constantly trying to sustain their livelihood through fair means. The paper will exhibit how Dalit trajectories trundle to form a new world of literature in Bengal.*

Keywords— *Growing Up Dalit, Dalit autobiography, African-American rights.*

I. INTRODUCTION

According to scholars, the term "Dalit Literature" emanated in the year 1958, from the first meeting of the Maharashtra Dalit Sahitya Sangh. People often view the 1960s, and 1970s as the period of Dalit Literature emergence. However, the 1920s glowed the arrival of Dalit pamphlet literature which ensued at roughly the same time when B.R. Ambedkar had initiated his revolution of Dalit people being allowed inside Hindu temples.

A Dalit representation emerged for the first time in Marathi literature when the iconic work 'Jevha Mi Jaat Chorli' (When I had concealed my caste), was written by Baburao Bagul in the year 1963. Namdeo Laxman Dhasal, another Marathi Dalit activist, was inspired greatly by Bagul's works. He steered the Dalit literary world numerous gems

from the 1970s. Dhasal, alongside J.V. Pawar, and Arun Kamble, founded the Dalit Panthers in 1972. The organisation is taken to be one of the major path-breakers in the Dalit revolution. It has advocated for the ideologies of Jyotirao Phule, Ambedkar, as well as the Black Panthers Movement (an organisation that fought for African-American rights). Dalit Panthers have transfigured Marathi literature. In the Southern part of the country, writer-activists like Bama (Tamil Nadu) were bringing up a change. Bama was a Dalit feminist who delineated an autobiography titled *Karukku* (1992). The book explores the joys and sorrows in the lives of Dalit Christian women of Tamil Nadu. Omprakash Valmiki's autobiography *Joothan* (1997), is a strong piece that movingly talks about caste-based discrimination in Uttar Pradesh.

The literary world has witnessed a dawn of new Dalit writers who have transformed the space with their powerful writings. P. Sivakami is one of the most prominent Dalit writers of the present age. Her book *The Grip of Change* (2006) is a very powerful piece of writing, considered as one of the finest. Vijila Chirrapad, a Dalit woman writer from Kerala, has published three collections till date. Her writings exhibit the problems in the lives of women. Dev Kumar, born in 1972, is a Dalit writer as well as a dramatist who founded a theatre group (Apna Theatre) in 1992 and has produced several plays arousing Dalit consciousness. Meena Kandasamy is one of the most famous feminist writers of our country and her writings are deeply linked to the anti-caste movement. Earlier, the literary sphere was dominated by Dalit characters that didn't have a very strong voice (for example, Lakshmi from *Children of God*) whereas, the present-day characters are penned down in a bold spectrum.

Huge development in Dalit literature came all across the nation after independence. Dalit voices in Marathi, Gujarati, Telugu, and Tamil among other languages looked upon Ambedkar as their center of inspiration, a savior figure, and formed what we define as Dalit literature today. Bengali Dalit literature has a different tradition. The first identified printed Dalit text takes us back to 1916. Much of what we refer to as Dalit Literature in Bengali is influenced by Harichand Thakur, a leader of the Motua community, along with Ambedkar being a major inspiration. Sekhar Bandyopadhyay's '*The Namasudra Movement*' (2005) and Sumit Sarkar's '*Writing Social History*' (1997) elucidate in detail how caste consciousness and anti-caste movements were introduced in colonial Bengal under the leadership of the Motuas.

But the most prominent and organized Dalit literary movement began in Bengal as late as in 1992 after Chuni Kotal's suicide. The protests against the acts which provoked it, culminated in the formation of the 'Bangla Dalit Sahitya Sanstha'; a magazine, 'Chaturtha Duniya', devoted solely to the nourishment and circulation of Dalit writings, was also launched. 'Chaturtha Duniya' (literally meaning the fourth world), on the one hand, means the world of the fourth 'varna' of the caste system (Sudras), while, on another focal point, articulates the testimonials of living in a world within the third world. This magazine has witnessed the rise of several important Dalit writers, notably Manohar Mouli Biswas, Jatin Bala, Kapil Krishna Thakur, Kalyani Charal, and Manju Bala among many others. The huge critical attention and popular acclaim acquired by Dalit proletariat author Manoranjan Byapari's

autobiography, *Itibritte Chandal Jiban*, has already triggered a commotion among readers and academics alike.

The Fourth World has raised a great threat to the hegemonic dominant caste writers reigning over the mainstream journals by not only creating parallel establishments operating in the interest of Dalits but also by challenging Savarna literature. These writers have unchained themselves according to Debayudh Chatterjee, the Dalits have gained access to the Brahmanical tools of knowledge and writing, carved out a niche for themselves by employing literature as a plausible mode of resistance. Translation has enabled the Bengali Dalit writers to attain international recognition. We can expect certainly at this hour that the day is not far when names like Manoranjan Byapari or Nakul Mallik would be evoked alongside Sunil Gangopadhyay or Shirshendu Mukhopadhyay to define the parameters of post-independent Bengali Literature.

Dalit¹ writings in Bengal have flourished since the 1970s and in the past ten years, writers from the Dalit community have given readers a new vent into their own lives, coming from marginal backgrounds. Manohar Mouli Biswas has painted a larger-than-life picture of his childhood by delineating intricate details of not only his everyday life but also his dormant anger against the brutal societal hegemonic structure, erupting through his lines in *Surviving In My World: Growing Up Dalit in Bengal*.

The other 'world' within Indian society can be viewed through this paper. This is the world where people are fronting the evils of caste discrimination. It depicts the difference between the society we live in and the harsh societal perils that marginalize a certain community of our kin. It is a tragedy for the Bengali society to pay privilege to the upper castes and disregard the people who are the reason for the well-fed state of the upper caste people. Biswas has aptly portrayed his unfortunate experiences within a Bengali society where he was subjected to alienation and treated inhumanly.

This paper also sheds light on Biswas's travel from the margin to the center against the oppressive hegemonic mechanism of power, caste, and tradition that intends to subdue the voice of the marginalized people under the monopoly of the ideology of mainstream Bengali 'bhodrolok'² culture and society. It will serve as a reflection of our society where caste creates barriers within our hearts, our love, and ourselves. The paper will portray the life of Biswas as a Dalit in Bengal, depicting the experiences of the community which he has expressed through his autobiography. Dalits have been subject to oppression regardless of time and Manohar Mouli Biswas quite justly has mirrored his sufferings as a Dalit in his work, *Surviving in My World*.

The paper seeks to bring into light the hegemonic doctrine of power that has always subdued the Dalit community regardless of the changes in power. As an autobiography, *Surviving in My World: Growing up Dalit in Bengal* exhibits the author's relentless sense of pain and anguish tormenting his mind since his childhood, being born in a subaltern background. The "bhadralok" community within the society have practiced the act of subduing the voice of the "namasudra"³ community for ages and have relished their position as imperial rulers in command of Bengal. I have endeavored to depict the sufferings inflicted upon the "namasudra" community in the hands of their "bhadralok" rulers narrated through the mouthpiece of Biswas in his autobiography. The equation of power has always found the "namasudra" community as crucial in terms of electoral politics whereas, in terms of unity, the "bhadralok" community has always treated them as Marginals.

By bringing in pictures from the text this paper tries to draw an authentic mosaic of events in the author's childhood and his challenges towards the hegemonic "bhadralok" society. *Surviving In My Life: Growing Up Dalit In Bengal* is an eye-opener for the society as it showcases Biswas's struggles within the very system we are living in and the text quite prominently questions the system, thus opting for a change for egalitarianism. By pointing out the phrase "My World", the author has drawn a sharp contrast between the normative world where the higher castes are a part and the world in which the "namasudras" are constantly living on the edge. Their life is all about surviving. To change the system in which the society runs, Biswas has opted for a change in the structure of the society where every human being must be given equal preference irrespective of background or caste. I have drawn out ample examples from Dalit writers in Bengal who speak about the same vision that Manohar Mouli Biswas has. Many non-dalit writers have also opted for a change in the social order and liberating the people of the margins and not only bringing them to the Center but acknowledging them as equal to everyone else.

According to Biswas, any person subject to oppression may be called a Dalit, regardless of his/her caste. To him, oppression is evident within every caste and has many different methods of subduing the weaker people to establish the strong one's dominance. Biswas goes down the pages of India's history and shows us how people in power have always exercised the practice of oppressing the weaker mass to establish their dominance in terms of political and socio-economical means.

The occupations of the "dom"⁴ community as Biswas was accustomed to the culture and was also a part of it requires a mention as well. The "dom" community

consists of people who have been forsaken by the governments for decades. Biswas mentioned that the chief occupation of the "dom" community was making bamboo baskets, yet they were labeled as criminals by several Bengali authors who belonged to the "bhadralok" society. This gives us a glimpse into the imagination of the "bhadralok" mass as they generalize the marginal people as thieves, robbers, and even murderers. My thesis is a reflection of Biswas's tormented state of mind, being grown up in a marginal community, fighting for survival, and going through the extremes to get established in life for the betterment of his future generations. This paper intends to delineate from a broader spectrum, the inexpressible anguish of the author's mind as he travels back in time to find himself trapped inside a cage of caste discrimination within the Indian society of which he is an indispensable part.

II. THE PERSPECTIVES OF VARIED EMINENT SCHOLARS

Manohar Mouli Biswas's *Surviving in My World* is a path-breaking autobiography of the celebrated Dalit author himself. The book has received mixed responses from critics all over Bengal. It serves as a mirror to the society we live in and the numerous social hazards the Dalits have to confront for ages. Manoranjan Byapari, another pioneer Dalit voice has remarked the book as exemplary for readers to come across as it shares the deepest pain and sufferings inflicted upon the Dalits and Biswas has emerged victorious from within the social atrocities he faced. In my opinion, he has remarked quite justifiably as the book contains mirror images of Biswas's childhood as he grew up within severe poverty, experiencing his life in a manner that is by no means humane. Biswas's autobiography is truly a mirror for us to look into our society and the filth that has contaminated it and created barriers in between.

Anuradha Bhattacharyya in a review of *Surviving in My World: Growing Up Dalit in Bengal* mentions that according to Biswas in the Introduction, there are people in our world who do not have any sensitivity for chronicles of pain (Bhattacharya, 2015, p.xix) and later on asserts in the Interview that a kind of psycho-pleasure works within himself at this moment which has strapped him ahead to forget the melancholy of the past. The sadness had touched him severely once, and Biswas wants to forget it forever. Bhattacharyya states that it is natural for a human being to pursue happiness. It seems that Biswas's autobiography is not only a series of memories but, as Anuradha Bhattacharyya mentions, a critique of the 'bhadralok' community of the Bengali society. There is a suppressed political influence behind the hierarchical stature of the

Bengali society where the 'bhadralok' community is relishing a higher status whereas the 'namasudras' are at the bottom and are always living on the edge, in a battle for endurance and to sustain the lives of their families.

In a conversation with Jaydeep Sarangi, Manohar Mouli Biswas commented on his autobiography that this autobiography is nothing but the life of a child-labor who had worked in the agricultural field along with his poor and illiterate parents. The hardship of a particular caste-group people, say Namasudras and who had been previously called 'Chandals' during the times of his forefathers and who had been living in the rural marshy localities and mainly living on agriculture are revealed here. It's a story about how they have been marginalized economically and socially in their life and their struggle to move forward. In my opinion, Biswas's words largely imitate the inhumane nature of the society of which, we are a part, and the constant struggle of the marginal community to sustain their livelihood whereas the 'bhadralok' community of our society is privileged with the resources to sustain their living quite easily and in a far more luxurious manner which is unimaginable till date for the Dalits.

Among the great creators of Bengali Dalit Literature, Manohar Mouli Biswas stands out as a towering figure in the history of Bengali Dalit Literature. Biswas laments for the state of inhumane practices in Bengal and quite naturally relates those sufferings of the marginal communities to the sufferings of his own life. He opines that the caste-biased society is to be convicted for the negligence of the governments towards the Dalits. The upper castes play the role of evil sovereignty which controls a caste hierarchy within the "secular" Bengali society and thus oppressing the people belonging to the Margins by being a dictatorial Center.

According to Angana Dutta and Jaydeep Sarangi, the autobiography depicting pleasures in the marshland is beautiful as they owned land, huts, nal groves, cows, and paddy fields. The sense of 'deprivation due to discrimination' is psychological and is not fully substantiated by the text. It is 'deprivation' due to relentless nature, the remoteness of his land, the landscape he was born in. Biswas mentions his agriculturalist background that about 80 percent of his community produced the harvest in the wet earth and fed the whole of Bengal. He has spoken of 'leaving behind' his 'ugly profession'. He says that the profession of his forefathers is not ugly, nor inferior, he uses the expression 'ugly' from a sense of hurt, hidden in the depths of his heart. I completely agree with Angana Dutta and Jaydeep Sarangi as it is evident that the sense of deprivation due to discrimination is largely psychological and is not fully substantiated by the author in the text. The

author's sense of pain and psychological anguish can be well felt by going through the lines of his autobiography alongside beautiful depictions of the marshlands where he spent his childhood, although growing up within extreme hardships.

III. PORTRAYAL OF THE INHUMANE SHALLOWSNESS

"Red flag has thirst for blood;/ A rose of revolt."— from Manohar Mouli Biswas's poem 'Sangram', translated by Jaydeep Sarangi by the name 'Warfare', depict the excruciating anguish in the heart of the author of *Surviving in My World: Growing Up Dalit in Bengal* through the spectrum of his community as a whole, which he envisioned as a new world within the subaltern world. The "red flag" is a symbol of revolt whereas the "thirst for blood" signifies the deep longing for revenge on the hegemonic autocracy by those who are marginalized from mainstream Bengali society. Biswas has time and again tried to dismantle the socially destructive practice of casting aside the Dalits or marginal people by the people in power, who relish their practice of neglecting their kin, the Dalits of Bengal.

Originally the work *Surviving in My World: Growing Up Dalit in Bengal* was written by Manohar Mouli Biswas in Bengali and was published in 2013 with the title *Amar Bhubane Ami Beche Thaki* whereas the English translation of the text was presented in 2015 and carries a subtitle: *Growing Up Dalit in Bengal*. If compared to the thriving translations of Tamil and Marathi Dalit literature, no significant work has been done with Bengali Dalit writings. *Surviving in My World: Growing Up Dalit in Bengal* is the first Bengali Dalit autobiography translated into English. The translators, Angana Dutta and Jaydeep Sarangi speak briefly, in the preface, about the 'biggest challenges' they faced while trying to 'recreate for an English-reading audience, the unfamiliar artifacts, sceneries, soundscapes, fragrances, dialects and emotions of life experienced in more than half-a-century-old Bengal' (Dutta, 2015, Sarangi, 2015, p. xxii). The act of translation presents a multi-layered act of interpretation. If autobiography is itself an interpretation of one's life, translation adds a second layer of interpretation and the final translated text is offered to the reader's interpretive skills.

Surviving in My World: Growing Up Dalit in Bengal is a poignant delineation of the life of Dalits in Bengal before and after the 1947 Partition. Fragments of memories from the author's childhood narrate the fate of the caste-ridden community of Namasudras, who live in a marginal small village in East Bengal. Designated by the 'babus'⁵ as 'pork-eating' *namas* (Biswas, p. 9), Biswas's community was objectified as a lower untouchable caste

and shunned by the upper-class, who would neither enter their neighbourhood 'nor think about sit and eat together with them' (Biswas, p. 10). Biswas envisions his father's hardships to sustain the livelihood of the family, as hunger haunted their lives; they were dependent on the river Kali for food. Biswas memorises the year when the rice fields were submerged underwater due to flood and the crops were destroyed by brackish water, *'Famine descended upon the people of kali and Chitra riverbanks... there was not a bit of rice in anyone's home. Almost everyone started spending their days in starvation'* (Biswas, p. 24). People had to adapt to this harsh environment to survive as they were left on their own, with no governmental intervention. Alike Prisnika, *'growing up like the water hyacinth and dying like it, uncared for'* (Biswas, p. 48), Biswas himself had to make out his formulae of survival. The harsh nature in Bengal taught him his first lesson against passivity. He elaborates a period in his childhood passed with a strange passion for fishing. He used to observe the movement of fish for hours and tried to learn their habits. The society of fish, as Biswas mentions, was also governed by a distinct social hierarchy of aristocrats and non-aristocrats. Biswas could easily distinguish a category of fish, the *'chuno, puti, koi, magur fishes'* (Biswas, p. 72), which behaved like lower castes: *"They were just happy to remain alive. The level of their demands was humble. They were joyful just to live. Their presence beside the aristocrats was completely unwanted, a mismatch. This is what I saw. I found profound similarities in the people of my community with those non-aristocrats."* (Biswas, p. 72)

Biswas decided to walk against the wind and found the best means of the change in education during those long hours of observation. Manohar was a first-generation learner from his family as coming off a Dalit background, his predecessors could not imagine being educated within the malignant caste-obsessed society of Bengal where only children of the 'bhadralok' class could only get into schools; the rest were seen less humanely. The question of education opens his text. *'The children must get educated'* (Biswas, p. 1) is his father's often repeated sentence, recollected with great pleasure. The first two sentences, exhibit a contrasting space with a thatched hut and mud veranda, juxtaposed with the father's inspiring words, implying the importance of education in changing people's lives. The story of getting the education and the adversities Biswas tackled in getting rudimentary school supplies to roam across the whole autobiography. This fascinating story of triumph acts as a poetic justice where a Dalit individual overthrows a diseased social system.

It is quite evident from Biswas's own experiences that there is a social hierarchy within the larger form of the Hindu society. Although the people belong to the same

religion, i.e., Hinduism, they are divided by the millennia-old malpractice of caste-division. Unlike in many parts of the world where racial division played the most cynical role in fragmenting mankind, in India, the fragmentation is rooted deep inside the Hindu religion, which dictates the division of people according to their caste: Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vysyas, and Sudras accordingly. The 'sudras' have since the Brahmin-dominated ages, have been used by the upper castes of India for their well-being whereas the 'sudras' themselves are treated in a much less humane way.

Biswas delineates excruciating episodes of suffering and torment, keeping away any form of pathos or self-victimization, he simply states, *"Just as everyone is proud of their community, I am no exception"* (Biswas, p. 57). The autobiography ends with the remembrance of a personal trauma related to his caste. The final episode where the mother of Rushita, the girl he used to love, described the impossibility of their marriage because he belonged to an untouchable caste, remains deeply encrusted in his memory: *'The words with which Rushita's mother had bade farewell remained alive as a deep wound time could not heal'* (Biswas, p. 85). Recollecting these agonising memories endows the autobiography with a testimonial quality crucial for any response to trauma. Though Biswas systematically utilized the word 'autobiography' in his book as well as in interviews, the translators added the proposal in their introduction using the term '*testimonio*' to focus on the woes of a whole group or community of Dalit people. Beverley (2004: 41) provides a pertinent definition, *'Testimonio represents an affirmation of the individual subject, even of individual growth and transformation, but in connection with a group or class situation marked by marginalization, oppression, and struggle.'* (Beverley, 2004:41) Seen from this perspective, Surviving in My World offers a significant case of testimonio, documenting the life of Bengali Dalits. Indeed, Biswas pens down the stories of 'a community that remained neglected away from the watch of the nation's administration. The people born in nature lived in their way and even died in their way' (Biswas, p. 48). In India, Dalit autobiographies are in many ways, the oppositional resistant 'micro-narratives' that retrieve "the small voices of history" (Guha, 1996, p. 1-12). The narrative sometimes takes the form of 'witness' or 'testimonial literature' where the narrator both witnesses and takes part in the events of witnessing simultaneously. Unlike the Dalits of another part of the country, Dalits in Bengal are the victims of politics of exclusion in the meta-narratives of history and social discourse. Interrogating My Chandal Life: An Autobiography of a Dalit (2017) by Manoranjan Byapari also unfolds the very tendency while depicting the strikingly suppressed and alternative history of the marginalization of Bengal. It is a vivid

Kunstlerroman⁶ of an iron-hearted artist. Byapari's battle against all odds for survival from evanescence towards the budding manifestation of being a writer and grabbing a prestigious position in society has numerous layers underneath. Each chapter of Byapari's autobiography speaks for the suffering, trauma, and resistance movement in the odyssey of a self-proclaimed hero who engages in the war against the hypocrisy and corrosion of the existing political and social scenario.

Biswas, in the Introduction⁷, mentions that in their world there are people who *"have no taste for narrations of pain"* (Biswas, p.xix) and later on asserts in an interview with Jaydeep Sarangi, *"a kind of psycho-pleasure works within me at this moment which has pushed me ahead to forget the melancholy of the past... The sadness had touched me severely once, and I want to forget it forever."* (Sarangi) The shallowness of the Bengali society that compelled Manohar Mouli Biswas to create his world of suffering in *Surviving in My World* reflected through his words when he was interviewed by me.

In the interview of Biswas (given later in this paper), we can quite evidently observe his disappointment towards the Bengali society, of which he was an integral part. Although he grew up in a Dalit family, he was in some ways optimistic about the societal condition of Bengal which he hoped would become egalitarian but he gradually became frustrated and enraged when he witnessed the unchanged, malignant nature of the caste-obsessed face of the society he lived in. A shocking experience in the vicious caste-obsessed society was when he came to know about the heartbreaking news of the death of a Dalit girl named Chuni Kotal, who was insulted by her teacher in front of her classmates and was compelled to commit suicide whereas the people responsible for her death did not receive any punishment from neither the justice system nor the government of Bengal at the time. This provoked Biswas and many other noteworthy marginal voices to raise protests against such inhumane practices. According to Biswas, a world within the world that is visible around us had become uncovered at this point of time. There was a visible barrier between the 'bhadrak' community and the "namasudra" community within the Bengali society.

According to Sankar Prasad Singha and Indranil Acharya in *Survival and Other Stories: Bangla Dalit Fiction in Translation* (2012), Marxists in India have always shied away from addressing the caste issues in public. For them, caste does not exist at all. Their rhetoric is all about class and class alone. This does not mean that the caste system does not exist in Bengal. Issues relating to caste discriminations have been addressed in the past by many well-known writers of Bengal, not to mention

Bankimchandra Chatterjee and Rabindranath Tagore. Dalits in Bengal, as elsewhere in India, have been ostracized and neglected throughout these years by the caste society. The stories in the anthology expose how inhuman treatments are meted out to the Dalits by the upper castes.

Interview of Manohar Mouli Biswas taken by Sutadripa Choudhury on 29th December 2019 at 651, V.I.P. Nagar, Kolkata 700100

Q. What pressurised you to narrate on the behalf of the people of your community?

A. Every great literary piece achieves its height when it portrays the sufferings of the downtrodden people of the society. In Bengal, writers have written about the sufferings of the marginal people but being a part of the 'bhadrak' community of the society, their views are often seen to be critical rather than showing the unjust acts ushered upon them by the people in power. This has compelled me to write a literary piece from my own experiences in this unjust Bengali society.

Q. What was the condition of the marginal people in Bengal during your childhood?

A. The people, who, according to the evil 'varna' system⁸, were at the bottom (i.e., 'namashudras'), were not treated like human beings by the upper caste people. All the laborious works were imposed upon them and they were denied their money after toiling like animals for the people who treated them as untouchables.

Q. What nature of oppression did the people of your community face?

A. We got the subtitle "namashudras" not very long ago. Our community was originally called "Chandals"⁹. In the *Manusmriti*¹⁰, there are sixteen passages where various cruel depictions of rituals concerning 'Chandals' are given. There are also descriptions of sacrificing 'Chandals' on particular days and hours which are termed as auspicious in the 'Manu'. So, you can clearly understand what regards the upper castes of the Hindu society in India have had for us for centuries.

Q. Can you enlighten us on any particular incident concerning insult to any marginal person for gaining the education in Bengal?

A. Indeed, I remember the horrific incident concerning a Dalit girl named Chuni Kotal. She was verbally abused by her teacher at college in front of her classmates for coming from a Dalit background. She eventually committed suicide and the people responsible for her death were not convicted. This is the situation of Dalits in Bengal when it comes to education. The upper castes can

never tolerate a Dalit individual climbing up the social ladder.

CONCLUSION

In his phenomenal poem "Phoolan" (translated by Jaydeep Sarangi), Biswas writes: "Oh! Phoolan, you have come from/ The lowest caste/ From a marginalised village." This portrays Biswas's world of suffering, in which, the rebellious marginal woman named Phoolan Devi also resided. Biswas mentions the words "lowest caste" to depict the fragmented society in Bengal and also the shallowness that has engulfed Bengali society for ages. Biswas warns the oppressors to be aware that although the Dalits resist the oppression, they can still fight back like Phoolan¹³ and raise their voice against this hegemonic tyranny. The depiction of pleasures in the marshland in *Surviving in My World* is beautiful. They owned land, huts, nal groves, cows, and paddy fields. The feeling of "deprivation due to discrimination" is psychological and is not fully substantiated by the author in the text. In many ways, the "deprivation" is due to relentless nature, the remoteness of his land, the landscape he was born in. *Surviving in My World* by Manohar Mouli Biswas is the portrayal of a remote, natural landscape and life of a pre-Independence Dalit community. In this book, he narrates experiences such as raising paddy, fishing, purchasing pigs, rowing boats on shallow water, plucking fruits and flowers for food, mattress-weaving, and catching birds as unique experiences of his community. To the reader today, such descriptions appear fantastic and cause nostalgia in the writer as well. He writes: "This is the autobiography of remembering the bygone memories of my community." (Biswas, p. 78)

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